

Linda T. Sánchez

1969–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE
DEMOCRAT FROM CALIFORNIA

2003–



Image courtesy of the Member

WHEN LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ¹ WON HER BID TO BECOME one of several United States Representatives from Los Angeles County on November 5, 2002, she not only earned a seat in Congress, she also made history: Linda and her older sibling Loretta, already on Capitol Hill, became the first sisters to serve together in Congress. Inextricably linked with her sister because of their similar careers, political agendas, and familial background, Linda Sánchez nonetheless has made clear her intention to shape her own identity in Congress: “I think we are both very qualified in different ways. I think I’m going to be able to make my mark in my way.”² Sánchez has supported affordable health care, quality education, and increased opportunities for Latinos. She also has vowed to use her experience as an organized labor leader and her previous work with the National Organization for Women to advocate the rights of women and workers from her district.³

The daughter of Mexican immigrants Ignacio Sandoval Sanchez, a mechanic at a plastics and rubber plant, and Maria Socorro Macias Sanchez, an elementary school teacher, Linda Sánchez was born on January 28, 1969, in Orange, California. The second youngest of seven children in a traditional Latino family, Sánchez, as well as her parents, questioned the sometimes-strict cultural mores that encouraged boys to attend college and girls to marry and have children. Maria Sanchez, whose decision to attend night school to further her education made her a role model for her daughters, supported Linda’s refusal to accept the status quo and suggested she work to change the inequalities in society.⁴ Reflecting upon the importance of her family and parents in her life, Sánchez commented, “In every Latino family, there’s a sense of ‘We need to stick together.’ It’s us against the world.” She went on to add, “But I think in our particular family, that’s even stronger because our folks expected great things from us. They wanted us to take advantage of all the opportunities they

never had.”⁵ Heeding the advice of her parents and the example set by her mother, Sánchez enrolled in the University of California at Berkeley while also working as a bilingual aide and an ESL teacher. After earning a B.A. in 1991, Sánchez graduated from UCLA Law School four years later.

Sánchez gained her first political experience working on campaigns while in high school and also participated heavily in her sister Loretta’s campaign for the House against nine-term incumbent Robert Dornan in 1996. In 1998, she left her private practice as a civil rights attorney to become field director of her sister’s re-election campaign. Following the election, she conducted national speaking engagements on the organization of effective grass-roots political campaigns and became the first Latina to head a countywide central labor council (Orange County Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO).⁶

Motivated by her desire to serve her community at a higher level, Linda Sánchez decided to run for the open seat in a newly created California district encompassing southeast Los Angeles County in 2002. The campaign for the congressional seat in the predominantly Democratic district that included a high percentage of Latino voters and a strong organized-labor movement received national attention. Sánchez joined a spirited race as one of three Latino candidates in a field of five contenders.⁷ She won the Democratic primary on March 5, 2002, and went on to defeat Republican Tim Escobar and Libertarian Richard Newhouse in the general election, with 55 percent of the vote.⁸ Shortly after her victory, Sánchez said: “I’m not here to take over the world. My passion is to get more women elected in politics. And if it’s a Hispanic woman, it’s even better.”⁹

During her first term, Sánchez was named to the Judiciary, Government Reform, and Small Business committees and was a member of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus. As the only freshman Democrat to earn a seat on the Judiciary Committee during the 108th Congress (2003–2005), Sánchez remarked, “Having worked with laws in the courtroom, I’ve really seen how legislation impacts people.”¹⁰ Sánchez sponsored measures to improve school safety and to assist women, minorities, and veterans to establish small businesses. She also introduced legislation to raise the minimum wage and was a vocal supporter of immigration reform in the United States. At the start of her second term, Congresswoman Sánchez was named an Assistant Democratic Whip.

FOR FURTHER READING

Biographical Directory of the U.S. Congress, “Linda Sánchez,”
<http://bioguide.congress.gov>

NOTES

- 1 Linda Sánchez, unlike her sister Loretta, uses the diacritic in her surname.
- 2 Chelsea J. Carter, “L.A. Representative’s Sibling Wins Primary; Sisters May Become First to Serve in House Together,” 7 March 2002, *San Mateo County Times*.
- 3 *Politics in America*, 2004 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Inc., 2003): 142.
- 4 “First Person Singular: Rep. Linda Sánchez (D-Calif.),” 25 April 2004, *Washington Post*: W09.
- 5 Roxanne Roberts, “House Mates: Loretta and Linda Sanchez Are Congress’s First Sister Act,” 12 December 2002, *Washington Post*: C1.
- 6 “Linda Sánchez for Congress,” <http://www.lindasanchez2002.com/about.shtml> (accessed 6 November 2002); “New Members Guide: Linda Sánchez,” 18 November 2002, *The Hill*.
- 7 Richard Marosoi, “Battle Shapes up in Latino District,” 19 February 2002, *Washington Post*: 1.
- 8 “Election Statistics, 1920 to Present,” <http://clerk.house.gov/members/electionInfo/index.html>.
- 9 Dena Bunis, “Congress Gets Its First Sister Act With Loretta and Linda Sanchez,” 6 November 2002, *Orange County Register*.
- 10 *Politics in America*, 2004: 142.